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ABSTRACT

To determine the relative importance of four narrative factors in the reading interests of male and female adolescents, 485 tenth through twelfth graders read 32 synopses of imaginary plots involving adolescents. The four narrative factors are: sex of the protagonist, setting, narration, and portrayal of events. Each of the factors was bipolarized in terms of its manifestations in plots favored by boys and by girls in previous studies. The results indicated that the reading interest of male and female adolescents can be predicted from the four factors. Specifically, the sex of the protagonist tends to influence the reading interest of both males and females; setting was a factor in determining reading interest for males but not for females; there was a pronounced relationship between narration and reading interest for males; and the manner in which events in the story are portrayed is related to reading interest only for older adolescent females. (FL)

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Jan M. Yoder

THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FOUR NARRATIVE FACTORS IN THE READING INTERESTS OF MALE AND FEMALE ADOLESCENTS IN GRADES TEN THROUGH TWELVE

A common finding of research into reading interests has acknowledged the presence of sex differences in adolescent reading choices. Although several researchers such as Simpson and Soares (1965) have particularized discreet factors within a single book or story which appealed to adolescents, most of the reading interest surveys are based on a single dimensional factor, that of the subject matter of the book. The studies identify differences in reading interests on a holistic basis and present a global view of reading interests.

The purpose of this research was to determine the relative importance of four narrative factors in the reading interests of male and female adolescents. A study of the relationship among four narrative factors found in every story and the reading interest values was designed to answer the following questions: Are there specific factors found in narratives which differentiate the reading choices of adolescent males and females? And if there are differentiating factors, to what degree do they interrelate?

REVIEW OF READING INTEREST STUDIES

Although numerous researchers have investigated the reading interests of students in secondary schools, the results have been surprisingly consistent. Studies indicated that sex is probably the most powerful single determiner of reading interest. While the potency of sex in governing reading interests appeared to be higher during the first years of high school, sex remains as an influential factor for determining interest values throughout high school. There are books which appeal to both boys and girls and can be used for common reading. Certain kinds of adventure stories, mysteries, historical fiction and humorous stories are often enjoyed by both sexes (Johnson, 1932; Brink, 1939; Strang, 1946; Norvell, 1950; Witty, 1961; & Carlsen, 1971).

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Boys prefer adventurous action-oriented content during the first years of high school, followed by nonfiction materials. There is an increased interest in biographies, factual news items, especially of the sports world; current social issues; and stories of youth in search of self-identity (Adam, 1940; Norvell, 1950; Sloan, 1961; Mott, 1970; Schraf, 1973; & Taylor, 1973).

Girls prefer people-oriented stories which portray the protagonist dealing with problems and concerns concurrent with the maturation stages of the reader. Adventure and mystery stories need to include personal relationships of the protagonists. Poetry, drama, and autobiographies are also read more by girls, indicating the female readers are interested in the introspective and affective aspects of the characters and actions. Although boys list a larger inventory of subjects in which they are interested, girls read more novels (Elder & Carpenter, 1929; Haebich, 1945; Norvell, 1950; Rissi, 1972; Stein, 1972; & Schraf, 1973).

Researchers have isolated specific factors which appear to influence reading interests of males and females. Girls prefer a female protagonist, but they will read some stories with a male protagonist. The setting in a book chosen by girls generally takes place within a specific time limit, such as a summer or a school year. The narrative device of first person is often used in stories read by girls, and the introspective plot allows ample time in order to discuss the effects of the action. The content deals with the personal nature of people, and it treats their feelings, concerns, and emotions seriously. The adolescent girl vicariously experiences dating, career options, family living, and marriage through the novel as she projects herself into these future roles.

On the other hand, novels which appear favorable to boys deal with external actions and things, rather than with people and emotions. Adventure must be lively, may include violence and bizarre happenings, and can contain several different subplots and a brief resolution. Boys seem to enjoy stories with aggressive

physical struggles found in sports, war, hunting, and police stories. Plots include detailed or scientific explanations for "how things work," such as in science fiction and in nonfiction. The protagonist must be male and near the reader's own age. Females are included as minor characters, and young children are usually not tolerated as major characters in a story (Thorndike, 1941; Meckel, 1946; Lyness, 1951; Furness, 1963; Carlsen, 1971; Norvell, 1973; Daigon, 1973; and Dunning & Howes, 1975).

METHOD

The structure of the research involved two related and interdependent populations: 1) the population of plots which were the objects whose interest value or appeal was to be determined, and 2) the population of adolescent readers, who considered the plots and individually acted as judges of the plots' interest value.

The population of plots may be conceptualized as the total embodiment of serious novels intended for and read by adolescents. Thirty-two synopses of imaginary adolescent plots were drawn from the large population of such plots. Since each of the synopses was about an experience of adolescence, the investigator assumed that each hypothetical novel had some degree of appeal for the readers. Each synopsis described an adolescent who was seriously working through a task or problem in order to reach maturity and establish a personal identity.

The panel of readers who served as judges included 485 tenth through twelfth graders enrolled at West High School, Davenport, Iowa. These readers rated each plot's interest appeal on a five-point scale according to their personal preferences and the plot's appropriateness in meeting their particular needs at the specific time of the reading.

The instrument designed to measure the relative importance of the four narrative factors in the reading interests of adolescents was a reading interest survey composed of constructed synopses of fictional adolescent novels. The four narrative factors,

sex of the protagonist, setting, narration, and portrayal of events, were selected as a means to measure reading choices of their assumed importance in the sex preferences of reading choices according to the review of the literature. The factors were also used because they exhibited the potential for changing the appearance or literal description of a plot to various degrees. Procedures for ordering the factors as a means for measuring their influence on the appeal of a plot were established in the research design by assigning paired descriptors or manifestations for each of the factors.

Each factor had two dichotomous characteristics. The first factor, the protagonist, had the potential for two manifestations, that of 1) a male protagonist, or 2) a female protagonist. The setting was limited to the physical and temporal boundaries of the incidents of the plot. The setting could be described as 1) being outdoors, limitless in space and occurring over an expanse of time, or 2) indoors, in a defined area and taking place within closely related series of time units. The narration, the third factor, reflected the manner in which the story was presented to the reader. The story could be told 1) on an explicit level, where action was activity based and outer-centered, or 2) on an implicit level which contained a psychological plot structure and the action dealt with feelings, emotions, and people. The last factor, portrayal of events, referred to the author's management of the framework within which the actions and details are presented. The portrayal of events either 1) took on a quality of realism which produced a credibility level for the reader, or 2) had the qualities of idealism and romanticism and events simply happened.

Each of the factors was bipolarized in terms of the manifestations they exhibited in plots designated as stories boys read and in plots designated as stories girls read (according to the review of research of reading interests and authorities in the field of adolescent literature). In this study, these characteristics were called "masculine" when they referred to qualities found in books often read by

boys and "feminine" when they referred to qualities generally found in "girls' books." In order to be statistically discriminatory, it was necessary to treat the two manifestations for each of the factors as mutually exclusive, that is where one single manifestation or descriptor appeared, the antithetical manifestation could not exist. Table 1 illustrates the four narrative factors with their assigned bipolarized characteristics.

Table 1

Four Narrative Factors with Assigned Bipolarized Characteristics: Masculine and Feminine

Factors	Feminine	Masculine
Sex of Protagonist	1 = female	A = male
Setting	2 = indoors definite time span confined area	B = outdoors unlimited time span open space
Narration	3 = inner-centered introspective implicit level	C = outer-centered activity-based explicit level
Portrayal of Events	4 = idealistic romantic happenings fantasy	D = realistic detailed explanations credible

Thus, a plot with a female protagonist (1), a confined setting (2), introspective narration (3), and a romantic portrayal of events (4), should have high interest value for girls. A plot with a male protagonist (A), open setting (B), activity-based narration (C), and a realistic portrayal of events (D), should have high interest appeal for boys. These two combinations represent the extremes of the continuum.

In order to determine the relationship between responses of male and female readers and the degree of feminine and masculine qualities of the plot factors and to note the extent to which the variations of the readers' responses can be accounted for in terms of the four narrative factors, permutations of the factors were derived.

These permutations placed each factor in all possible combinations with each of the other factors. The combinations listed in Table 2 illustrate the permutations for the four narrative factors.

Table 2

Permutations of Four Narrative Factors with Assigned Characteristics: Masculine and Feminine

Assigned Factor Characteristics	Combinations
4 feminine factors	1 2 3 4
3 feminine factors and 1 masculine factor	A 2 3 4 1 B 3 4 1 2 C 4 1 2 3 D
2 feminine factors and 2 masculine factors	1 B C 4 1 B 3 D 1 2 C D A 2 3 D A 2 C 4 A B 3 4
3 masculine factors and 1 feminine factor	A 2 C D A B 3 D A B C 4 1 B C D
4 masculine factors	A B C D

A shift in the position of factors appearing in the combinations used for writing the plot synopses was made in order to minimize the relative importance of the factors occurring in initial positions in the synopses and to distribute the syntactic structure. In order to have each factor appear in each position with both the masculine and feminine characteristics, the number of synopses was doubled from 16 to 32 story lines.

To ensure that the topic of each synopsis was within the realm of adolescent experience, a control of the subject was needed. Eight develcpmental tasks often found in adolescent novels and discussed by Carlsen (1971) were used as themes for

the fictional plot synopses. The themes included:

1. Discovering sex roles in our culture.
2. Developing new relationships with peers.
3. Achieving an easy relationship with the opposite sex.
4. Accepting one's physical body.
5. Changing relationships with parents.
6. Working for pay.
7. Finding a vocation.
8. Becoming aware of value patterns.

By associating only one task with each of the 32 plot synopses, each task was used a total of four times. The theme assigned to the synopsis controlled the action and events of the plot line.

In writing the plot synopses, the factor combinations were followed as nearly as possible. In the following fictional plot synopsis, the protagonist was a female (1), the setting was indoors and confined (2), the narrative technique was introspective (3), and the portrayal of events included fantasizing about future roles (4). The basic task or theme in the synopsis was discovering sex roles in our culture. The synopsis read:

> Alice is recovering from a car accident. While she is confined to her bedroom, she struggles with the fear that her scars may change her appearance and limit her role as a woman.

A synopsis which included a male protagonist (A), an outdoor setting with an unlimited space area (B), activity-based narrative technique (C), and a detailed portrayal of events (D) with the theme of becoming aware of value patterns read:

> While working in a national park, Jack startles a man who is digging a grave. Although Jack sees the man first and could have killed him, he cannot. Jack is stalked in the nearby mountains by the professional killer.

The following synopsis was a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics of the narrative factors. The protagonist was male (A), the setting was indoors (2), the narration was introspective and inner-centered (3), and the portrayal of events was realistic and detailed (D). The basic task was accepting one's physical body.

Dreading the taunts and jeers of the locker room gang, Larry finds new excuses to miss P.E. With the understanding and guidance from an assistant coach, he finally begins to develop confidence and to accept himself.

In order to keep the synopses as similar as possible, the following guidelines were established: 1) the adolescent was the implied reader; 2) each synopsis used one of the eight basic tasks as the theme; 3) no references to age, ethnic cultures, or locations were made; and 4) the present time was always assumed.

PILOT STUDY

The fictional plot synopses were presented to a group of 26 reading and English teachers in a graduate course. The teachers were asked to score the plot synopses according to the factor combinations, that is sex of protagonist, open or closed setting, active or introspective narrative device, and romantic or realistic portrayal of events. It was apparent from the responses of the teachers that the factors in the synopses were characterized according to the masculine or feminine manifestations which had been assigned to them.

The reading interest survey, made up of the 32 synopses and a response sheet, was administered to 50 junior high school and senior high school students. The students were asked to respond to each synopsis on a five-point scale. If they were very interested in reading a book like the one described in the synopsis, they circled number 1. If they were rather interested, they circled number 2; undecided, number 3; rather uninterested, number 4; and definitely not interested, number 5. On the basis of the responses from the two groups, the topical matter appeared to be suitable for older adolescents.

The survey was then administered to 25 high school English classes.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Multiple regression analysis was used to study the magnitudes of the effects of the four independent variables on the reading interest scores of the adolescent males and females. The computer program SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social

Sciences was used to carry out the analysis.

The readers were divided into six groups by age and sex. The six groups included:

Group One--males, ages 15 to 16

Group Two--females, ages 15 to 16

Group Three--males, age 17

Group Four--females, age 17

Group Five--males, ages 18 to 19

Group Six--females, ages 18 to 19

The four independent variables used for predicting the interest values of a book for female and male adolescents included:

X_1 = the protagonist--with two manifestations: scored 0,1 (female and male)

X_2 = the setting--with two manifestations: scored 0,1 (closed and open)

X_3 = the narrative technique--with two manifestations: scored 0,1 (introspective and activity-based)

X_4 = the portrayal of events--with two manifestations: scored 0,1 (fantasy and realism)

The analysis was divided into three parts. The first part consists of a point-biserial correlation between each characteristic of the bi-polarized factors and its appeal to each of the six groups of readers. The second part summarizes the multiple correlation analyses bearing on the combination of factors which most effectively predicts the interest value for each group. The last multiple correlation analyses determine which factors contribute differentially to male and female reading interest.

Point-Biserial Correlation between Each Characteristic and Its Interest Value

Initially, each synopsis was "scored" according to the characteristic of each factor. The point-biserial correlation was then obtained between each

characteristic and its appeal or mean interest value. For the protagonist variable, for example, this is equivalent to asking: to what degree do female readers find books with female protagonists more appealing than books with male protagonists; to what degree do male readers find books with male protagonists more appealing? Analogous questions were considered for the remaining characteristics.

Within each of the six groups, the F-test was also used to test the significance of the difference between the average reading interest score for stories with a masculine characteristic and the average reading interest score for plots with a female characteristic.

Table 3 shows the intercorrelations of the four narrative factors with the average reading interest scores for the six groups.

Table 3

Intercorrelations of Factors with the Mean Interest Values for Six Groups

	Protagonist	Setting	Narration	Portrayal of Events
Group 1 Males (15-16)	.495	.287	.491	.017
Group 2 Females (15-16)	.336	.000	.052	.223
Group 3 Males (17)	.434	.306	.482	.087
Group 4 Females (17)	.346	.000	.017	.199
Group 5 Males (18-19)	.427	.301	.473	.011
Group 6 Females (18-19)	.377	.059	.152	.296

The analyses of the mean interest value for the fictional synopses and of the point-biserial correlation between the factors and reading interest scores reveal differences between males' reading interests and females' reading interests. For

the male readers, two of the most influential factors related to reading interest are sex of the protagonist and narrative device. The relationship of setting to interest is also significant, but to a slightly less degree. The three variables were significant at the .05 level for all three groups of males. The fourth factor, portrayal of events, appears to have no relationship to the reading interest value of male adolescents.

The analyses of the reading interests of adolescent females indicates that sex of protagonist is significantly related to reading interest, but it is not as strong a factor for females as it is for males. Protagonist was significant at the 10% level among 15 to 16 and 17 year olds and at the .05 level for the oldest females. It was the only variable of the four factors to reach the .05 level of significance for females. Portrayal of events shows some relationship to reading interest, at least for the older females. There is no evidence to support the research hypotheses that narration and setting are related to the reading interest of female adolescents.

Multiple Correlation Analyses of the Combination of Factors with Each Age and Sex Group

Multiple correlation techniques were used with each sex and age group to determine what combination of factors can be used most effectively to predict interest value. When a factor is considered individually and in isolation from the other factors, it may be related to the interest value. But when it is considered in combination with the other three factors, its value may prove redundant. The combinations were correlated to the interest level over the 32 story lines for each of the six groups. The general form of the equation used to "predict" the interest value of a story is written:

$$y = a_1X_1 + a_2X_2 + a_3X_3 + a_4X_4 + c$$

In this equation, the values a_1 through a_4 equal the regression coefficients or weights by which factor scores are combined, X_1 through X_4 are the factor scores or independent

variables, and c equals the intercept constant. The multiple correlation and the prediction formulas are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Predictability of Interest for Four Factors for Six Groups

	Prediction Formula $\hat{y} = a_1X_1 + a_2X_2 + a_3X_3 + a_4X_4 + c$	X_1 = protagonist X_2 = setting X_3 = narration X_4 = portrayal of events
Group 1	$\hat{y} = (-.615)(X_1) + (-.357)(X_2) + (-.610)(X_3) + (.021)(X_4) + 4.0512$ R = .754 Crucial Variables: Protagonist, Narration, Setting	
Group 2	$\hat{y} = (.436)(X_1) + (.013)(X_2) + (.068)(X_3) + (.290)(X_4) + 2.3306$ R = .406 Crucial Variables: Protagonist, (Portrayal of Events)	
Group 3	$\hat{y} = (-.528)(X_1) + (-.372)(X_2) + (-.586)(X_3) + (.106)(X_4) + 3.9456$ R = .723 Crucial Variables: Protagonist, Narration, Setting	
Group 4	$\hat{y} = (.398)(X_1) + (.000)(X_2) + (.020)(X_3) + (.230)(X_4) + 2.4650$ R = .400 Crucial Variables: Protagonist, (Protrayal of Events)	
Group 5	$\hat{y} = (-.507)(X_1) + (-.357)(X_2) + (-.562)(X_3) + (-.013)(X_4) + 4.0894$ R = .705 Crucial Variables: Protagonist, Narration, Setting	
Group 6	$\hat{y} = (.443)(X_1) + (.069)(X_2) + (.179)(X_3) + (.348)(X_4) + 2.3784$ R = .507 Crucial Variables: Protagonist, Portrayal of Events	

The meaning of these prediction formulas may be illustrated by the derived values for Group 1. In this group, the optimal prediction of a story's interest value is obtained by combining the factors as follows:

$$y = (-.615)(X_1) + (-.357)(X_2) + (-.610)(X_3) + (.021)(X_4) + 4.0512$$

A book with female protagonist ($X_1 = 0$), open setting ($X_2 = 1$), activity-based narration ($X_3 = 1$), and realistic portrayal of events ($X_4 = 1$) would have an estimated interest for Group 1 of:

$$y = (-.615)(0) + (-.357)(1) + (-.610)(1) + (.021)(1) + 4.0512 = 3.105$$

For the two stories of this type, one had an actual interest value of 3.41 and the other a value of 2.64. The deviations for 3.105 represent the "unpredictability" of the appeal of any particular story. It stems from the subjectivity of the student ratings and the unique details of the story plots.

The results in Tables 4 and 5 are quite consistent for the three age groups within each sex. The two sex groups, on the other hand, show significant differences between them. For males, the sex of the protagonist and the narrative technique constitute factors of primary importance. The character of the setting also influences the appeal of a story, but not to as high a degree as the first two factors. The portrayal of events has no discernible influence on the interest value of a story to males.

For females, the sex of the protagonist is the primary factor of importance. In none of the three age groups does the setting or narrative technique contribute to the prediction of a story's interest level. Among the oldest girls, the portrayal of events assumes some significance. The importance of this factor is not clear cut at earlier age levels.

Interest appears to be more predictable for boys than for girls. For all three age groups, the multiple correlation for boys is above .700, with some hint that predictablility declines slightly with age. For girls, the highest multiple correlation is .507, with lower values occurring in the younger age groups.

Multiple Correlation Analyses of Predictability of Differential Appeal for Males and Females in Three Age Groups

Multiple correlation analyses were used to determine which factors in the

Table 5

Regression Weights and F Tests of Four Factors in Multiple Regression Analysis

Factors		Regression Weights	F-Value
Group 1 Males	R = .754		
Protagonist		-.515	15.367**
Setting		-.357	5.193**
Narration		-.528	10.693**
Portrayal of Events		.021	.018
Group 2 Females	R = .406		
Protagonist		.436	3.654*
Setting		.001	.000
Narration		.068	.091
Portrayal of Events		.290	1.615
Group 3 Males	R = .723		
Protagonist		-.528	10.693**
Setting		-.372	5.307**
Narration		-.586	13.145**
Portrayal of Events		.106	.432
Group 4 Females	R = .400		
Protagonist		.398	3.860*
Setting		.000	.000
Narration		.020	.010
Portrayal of Events		.230	1.284
Group 5 Males	R = .705		
Protagonist		-.507	9.825**
Setting		-.357	4.876**
Narration		-.562	12.070**
Portrayal of Events		.013	.007
Group 6 Females	R = .507		
Protagonist		.443	5.178**
Setting		.069	.127
Narration		.179	.849
Portrayal of Events		.348	3.196*

*Significant at .05 level
**Significant at .01 level

story combinations contributed differentially to male reading interest and female reading interest. For this purpose, the book's interest value for males was subtracted from the book's interest value for females. This difference indicates by a positive value a stronger appeal to females, and by a negative value, a stronger appeal to males. This criterion was then "predicted" from a combination of the four factors.

The general form of the equation used to "predict" the difference in reading interest for each age group is written:

$$\bar{y}_f - \bar{y}_m = (a_1 X_1) + (a_2 X_2) + (a_3 X_3) + (a_4 X_4) + c$$

In this equation, the values $\underline{a}_1$ through $\underline{a}_4$ equal the regression coefficients or weights by which factor scores are combined, X_1 through X_4 are the factor scores or independent variables, and $\underline{c}$ equals the intercept constant. The multiple correlation and the formulas for the predicted differences are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

Predictability for Differential Appeal for Four Factors for Males and Females of Three Age Groups

	Prediction Formula $\widehat{\bar{y}_f - \bar{y}_m} = a_1X_1 + a_2X_2 + a_3X_3 + a_4X_4 + c$	X_1 = protagonist X_2 = setting X_3 = narration X_4 = portrayal of events
Group 1 (15-16)	$\widehat{\bar{y}_f - \bar{y}_m} = (-1.051)(X_1) + (-.358)(X_2) + (-.678)(X_3) + (-.268)(X_4) + 1.7206$ R = .862 Crucial Variables: Protagonist, Setting, Narration, Portrayal of Events	
Group 2 (17)	$\widehat{\bar{y}_f - \bar{y}_m} = (-.927)(X_1) + (-.372)(X_2) + (-.606)(X_3) + (-.123)(X_4) + 1.4806$ R = .876 Crucial Variables: Protagonist, Setting, Narration	
Group 3 (18-19)	$\widehat{\bar{y}_f - \bar{y}_m} = (-.950)(X_1) + (-.426)(X_2) + (-.741)(X_3) + (-.361)(X_4) + 1.7109$ R = .858 Crucial Variables: Protagonist, Setting, Narration, Portrayal of Events	

The meaning of these formulas for predicting the differences in book interest values are similar to the illustrations cited for prediction formulas in part two. For example, for the 15 to 16 year old age group, the optimal prediction of the difference of the mean interest value for males and mean interest value for females is obtained by combining the factors as follows:

$$\bar{y}_f - \bar{y}_m = (-1.051)(X_1) + (-.358)(X_2) + (-.678)(X_3) + (-.268)(X_4) + 1.720$$

A book with a female protagonist ($X_1 = 0$), open setting ($X_2 = 1$), introspective narration ($X_3 = 0$), and realistic portrayal of events ($X_4 = 1$) would have an estimated interest for Group 1 of:

$$\bar{y}_f - \bar{y}_m = (-1.051)(0) + (-.358)(1) + (-.678)(0) + (-.268)(1) + 1.720$$

$$= 1.094$$

Two selections with 0101 combination of factors had a difference in the mean interest value of .54 and 1.35. The deviations for 1.094 represent the "unpredictability" of the differential appeal of any particular story.

The results in Tables 6 and 7 show that when the four factors are considered in concert, there is a high degree of predictability of the difference in a book's appeal for males and females. The results do not indicate whether a book will be of high or low interest for a specific group, but rather that the book will appeal differently to the two sexes.

For students 15 and 16 years old, the protagonist is of pronounced significance in predicting the difference in a book's appeal for the two sexes. The narration also constitutes a factor of primary importance. The other two factors, setting and portrayal of events, significantly predict differential appeal of a book for the readers, but not to as high a degree as the first two factors do.

Three factors are significant in distinguishing differences for 17 year old males and females. Again, the protagonist is of primary importance, followed by narration and setting. The portrayal of events has no discernible predictive value in differentiating between males and females of this group.

Table 7

Regression Weights and F Tests of Four Factors in Multiple Regression Analysis of Differential Interest Appeal for Males and Females

Factors	Multiple Correlation	Regression Weights	F-Value
Ages 15-16	R = .862		
Protagonist		-1.051	48.999**
Setting		-.358	5.706**
Narration		-.678	20.427**
Portrayal of Events		-.268	3.202*
Age 17	R = .876		
Protagonist		-.927	55.924**
Setting		-.372	9.020**
Narration		-.606	23.893**
Portrayal of Events		-.123	0.996
Age 18-19	R = .858		
Protagonist		-.950	38.733**
Setting		-.426	7.810**
Narration		-.741	23.590**
Portrayal of Events		-.361	5.613**

*Significant at .05 level
**Significant at .01 level

In concert, the four factors all help to distinguish differences in a book's appeal for the oldest males and females in this study. All four factors are significant at the .01 level, with protagonist and narration contributing most to the prediction of differential appeal between males and females. Setting and portrayal of events assume more significance for this group than in either of the former two age groups.

Differential interest appeal is highly predictable for male and female adolescents. For all three age groups, the multiple correlation is above .850 with predictability remaining relatively stable throughout high school.

CONCLUSION

Several patterns in reading interests for the two sexes emerge from analysis of the data. The following generalizations are supported by evidence presented.

1. The sex of the protagonist tends to influence the reading interest of male and female adolescents. For both sexes it appears to be the most potent factor in determining reading choices, but it is less influential for girls than for boys. Boys rarely preferred stories with female protagonists, and in the few exceptions which were reported, the stories with female protagonists were adventure or sports stories. Boys also rejected stories with male protagonists when the plots were romantic or introspective, especially when emotional reactions represent a significant part of the plot. Older males appear to be slightly more tolerant of female protagonists and of stories with male protagonists who are exploring personal relationships. Girls are willing to read stories with male protagonists, providing the other factors, such as theme and plot, are significant. They often choose stories with male protagonists when mystery is involved, personal relationships are explored, or romance is suggested. Older females are not as eager to read selections when the story is primarily an adventure, mystery or sports story, even though the protagonist is female. These findings agree with other research studies, such as that of Meckel, Norvell, and Smith and Eno. A finding not noted in other research is the increasing significance of the sex of the protagonist to the reading interest of older females. Other research, such as that by Smith and Eno, has suggested that older females want stories with heroes, too. According to the data in this research, the relationship of the sex of the protagonist to reading interest increases as the females get older.

2. Setting is a significant factor in determining reading interest for males, but not for females. Girls appear to have no strong preference for stories with closed setting. Boys, on the other hand, overwhelmingly prefer stories with physical settings that are open, outdoors, or moving from place to place. In the present study, whenever males indicated interest in a selection with a closed, confined setting, the story included a male protagonist and a plot of mystery and

intrigue. Older males are more willing to read selections with confined settings as they begin to read stories centering on personal relationships. The setting factor is not correlated as highly to interest as is the protagonist factor, but it remains a stable and significant influence in determining the reading interests of adolescent males.

3. Results from the data indicate a pronounced relationship between narration and reading interest for male adolescents. For males, narration is almost as influential a determiner of reading choices as is sex of the protagonist. When males preferred selections with introspective narration, the stories included a male protagonist. Since the older males did not consistently reject stories exposing emotional reactions rather than external action, introspective narrative techniques are tolerated. However, none of the selections using introspective narrative techniques and suggesting a boy-girl relationship are preferred by the males. Boys respond to stories with much action and descriptions of external actions. Girls, on the other hand, choose stories with introspective narrative techniques as often as they choose selections with descriptions of external actions. Older females show a slight preference for introspective devices probably a result of their increasing rejection of mystery and adventurous narratives. The results of the study are consistent with other research that indicates girls are willing to read a variety of selections and that their reading interests are less predictable than boys' interests are.

4. The manner in which events in the story are portrayed to adolescent readers is significantly related to reading interest only for the oldest group of females. Whether the events are presented realistically or imaginatively makes no difference to males and younger females. Older females enjoy selections that fantasize future roles and relationships to a higher degree than the younger girls do. It is the opinion of this researcher that the factor of portrayal of events cannot be

illustrated clearly enough in the short synopse for it to influence the reading choices of the students. Whether the synopsis deals realistically or fantastically with a situation appears to be a personal judgment. However, the results of the data do suggest that portrayal of events contributes significantly to predicting the difference in the appeal of a book to males and females, although its power to influence interest within a sex group appears negligible.

5. The reading interest of male and female adolescents can be predicted from the four factors used in this study. Girls' reading interests are less predictable than are boys' interests. The females show more versatility in their reading choices, and they often rate stories as being more interesting than males do. Reading interests of females can be predicted most clearly by the sex of the protagonist, and to a lesser degree by the portrayal of events. The setting and narration cannot be used effectively to predict the reading interests of female adolescents. The appeal of a book to males is fairly predictable, with three of the four factors significantly contributing to prediction: sex of the protagonist, setting, and narration. Portrayal of events cannot be used to predict reading interest levels for male readers. There is some hint in the data that predictability declines slightly with age for male adolescents. It would appear that males extend their reading interests as they mature.

6. The research question related to this study was as follows: Are there specific factors that differentiate the reading choices of adolescent males and adolescent females? It appears from the results of this research that the difference in interest of the books to males and females is highly predictable from the four factors selected for study. The appeal of a book in the three age groups of males and females is consistent and predictable from the four variables. All four factors contribute significantly in predicting differences in the reading choices of male and female adolescents.

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